

Transactions

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TRANSPORTATION NEWS
FOR THE NINE-COUNTY
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA



California High-Speed Rail on Fast Track to Construction

STATE BOND FUNDS AND FEDERAL STIMULUS BILL GIVE PROJECT A BOOST

After more than a decade of hopes, dreams and planning, California's high-speed train system is on a roll, propelled by a \$9.9 billion bond measure approved by the state's voters in November 2008 and most recently by President Barack Obama's plan to jump-start high-speed rail in America with \$8 billion in federal stimulus package dollars — plus \$1 billion a year for at least five years in other federal funds. If the funding momentum continues, fast trains operating at speeds of up to 220 miles per hour could be whisking passengers nonstop from downtown San Francisco to downtown Los Angeles in under two hours, 40 minutes by the year 2020.



In this conceptual illustration, a high-speed train parallels a Caltrain commuter train in the vicinity of a joint San Jose station of the future.

Tracking California's High-Speed Rail Route



The "backbone" of California's planned 800-mile high-speed rail system extends from Anaheim and Los Angeles to Palmdale, and through the Central Valley to Fresno. Just south of Merced, the route splits: The trunk line veers west, crossing through the Pacheco Pass to Gilroy and traveling up the Peninsula to San Jose and San Francisco along the Caltrain right of way; another branch would extend from Merced north to Sacramento. At Los Angeles, an extension would bring tracks to the Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernardino counties) and then south to San Diego.

Both MTC's *Regional Rail Plan* adopted in 2007 and the California High-Speed Rail Authority's plan call for the high-speed trains to extend their reach by connecting with and complementing the Bay Area's regional rail network. The high-speed trains would intersect with Caltrain's Baby Bullet trains in San Jose, San Francisco and select Peninsula cities. High-speed rail passengers could access the East Bay via new joint-use infrastructure (regional rail and high-speed trains) in the ACE rail corridor that traverses the Altamont Pass and a potential BART connection in Livermore (which would involve an extension from the Dublin/Pleasanton BART station).

The federal commitment solidified further in mid-April when Obama unveiled a strategic high-speed rail plan calling for a world-class passenger rail system. "My high-speed rail proposal will lead to innovations that change the way we travel in America," he said.

MTC Executive Director Steve Heminger said he is "very encouraged by the thrust and direction of this effort," adding, "The fact that the president himself released the plan indicates he intends to make high-speed rail a signature issue of his Administration."

California must compete for the federal dollars with nine other regions planning high-speed rail lines, including the Pacific Northwest, the Gulf Coast, Chicago/Midwest, Florida and Northern New England. But, Heminger noted, California is the only corridor building truly high-speed service. "Plus," he said, "we have \$9.9 billion in state funds, while other corridors have little, if any, local funds."

With a current price tag of \$45 billion, the California high-speed train system ranks as the largest and most expensive project in California history. "There's no question it is a costly undertaking," Heminger said, "but high-speed rail has tre-

"Shovel-Ready" Projects

Also giving the state an edge are years of planning by the California High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA). The authority has identified at least \$3.5 billion worth of "shovel-ready" projects that could begin construction by the 2012 federal deadline for obligating stimulus money. Of all the regions in the country planning fast train systems, "California high-speed rail is the only genuine pending project," HSRA Chair Quentin Kopp said.

One Bay Area candidate is the electrification of the Peninsula's Caltrain system, which would share right of way with the high-speed rail line. The project would be eligible for federal funds as well as for a portion of the \$950 million in state high-speed rail bond money set aside for regional rail upgrades.

With a current price tag of \$45 billion, the California high-speed train system ranks as the largest and most expensive project in California history. "There's no question it is a costly undertaking," Heminger said, "but high-speed rail has tre-

mendous benefits for the environment and for mobility."

The HSRA believes that by 2030, the high-speed train system will carry more than 90 million passengers per year, with fares approximately half that of air travel. According to the HSRA, the system would cut 12 billion pounds of CO₂ emissions per year by 2030 (equivalent to the annual emissions of 2 million cars) while eliminating the need to build 3,000 miles of freeway lanes and five airport runways.

Hurdles Still Ahead

Despite the prospect of receiving state and federal funds and "expressions of interest" from more than two dozen potential private funders, California's high-speed rail system still faces hurdles. Several Peninsula cities have raised concerns about the train route through their jurisdictions. Meanwhile, in San Francisco, the plan to bring high-speed trains and extend Caltrain to a new "Grand Central" Transbay Transit Center at First and Mission streets hit a roadblock when HSRA consultant engineers suggested that the underground "train box" planned beneath the new terminal could be inadequate for the number of high-speed trains coming into the city. MTC's Heminger is working to resolve the issue with officials from Caltrain, the HSRA and the Transbay Joint Powers Authority, which is overseeing construction of the new terminal.

— Marjorie Blackwell

Announcements



Bike to Work Day Rides Again

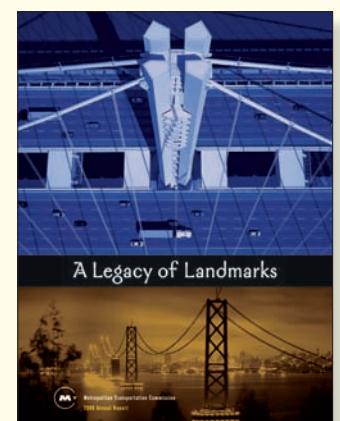
The San Francisco Bay Area's 15th annual Bike to Work Day will take place on Thursday, May 14, 2009. Participants will be cheered on by volunteers providing liquids, treats and reusable goody bags at nearly 250 Energizer Stations located along bike commute routes. Back this year is Team Bike Challenge, a friendly competition in which teams of friends and co-workers ride throughout the month of May in order to score points and prizes. New this year is a Bike to Work Day fan page on Facebook. For more information go to <bicycling.511.org>.



Commission Adopts Transportation 2035 Plan

Capping two years of intensive analysis and outreach, MTC in April adopted the *Transportation 2035 Plan for the San Francisco Bay Area*. The plan specifies how some \$218 billion in anticipated federal, state and local transportation funds will be spent in the nine-county Bay Area during the next 25 years. True to its title, "Change in Motion," the plan launches several ambitious initiatives to tame traffic and combat climate change. The 2035 package, consisting of the draft plan and adopted changes along with the *Environmental Impact Report* and other related documents, can be viewed online at <www.mtc.ca.gov/planning>. A printed version of the *Transportation 2035 Plan* will be available by summer.

In Print



2008 Annual Report: "A Legacy of Landmarks"

MTC's *2008 Annual Report* looks back to the visionary transportation projects built in the Bay Area during the depths of the Great Depression, juxtaposing sepia-toned photographs of these monumental structures with views of current and planned projects of similar scope and ambition. The message? In the words of MTC Executive Director Steve Heminger, "Though it may seem prudent to shrink back from ambitious plans at a time of economic difficulty, ...this is not the wise course."

View the report online at <www.mtc.ca.gov/library>. To order a hard copy, e-mail <library@mtc.ca.gov> or call 510.817.5836.

Calendar

For dates, times and locations of upcoming MTC meetings, visit <www.mtc.ca.gov/meetings>.





This will be a banner year for the new East Span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, as the structure's marquee element starts to rise from the Bay waters: the daring and dazzling self-anchored suspension span, referred to as the SAS. MTC's Bay Area Toll Authority (BATA) is one of three partner agencies overseeing the seismic safety project under the umbrella of the Toll Bridge Program Oversight Committee, which also consists of Caltrans and the California Transportation Commission. BATA also is financing the \$5.7 billion project with bridge toll funds. Here's an update of what's happening, and how you can view the action.

It Takes a Massive Crane to Build a Monumental Bridge

They don't call it the "Left Coast Lifter" for nothing. The immense, barge-mounted crane that slipped under the Golden Gate in March will be used to help lift into place monstrous tower and deck sections for the self-anchored suspension span, referred to as the SAS.

The barge-crane combo is an engineering attraction in its own right, weighing in at a whopping 6,650 tons, reaching 328 feet into the sky when its apparatus is fully

extended and capable of hoisting 1,873 tons.

And like the bridge it is helping to build, the "Left Coast Lifter" is international in its heritage, with the barge built in Portland, Ore., then shipped to China for fitting with the crane, which was custom built at Zhenhua Port Machinery Co. Ltd. (ZPMC) in Shanghai. In February the barge-mounted crane was placed on a ship for the month-long return trip to the "left coast" of the U.S. and its final destination at the East Span construction site.

The crane was put to work shortly after arriving at the Port of Oakland, unloading steel from China for the temporary support structures for the new signature span. This is just a warm-up for the heavy lifting it will do out in the Bay near Yerba Buena Island starting in mid-May, first hoisting temporary trusses, and eventually raising all 28 deck units of the new span's permanent roadway as well as the lower sections of the steel tower.

— Brenda Kahn & Karin Betts

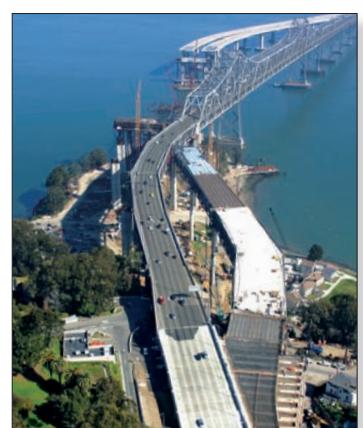


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The Left Coast Lifter steams past Yerba Buena Island on its way to the job site, visible just beyond the island: the gap between the already completed East Span Skyway and the Yerba Buena Island tunnel.

Tricky Traffic Shift To Close Bay Bridge Over Labor Day Weekend

The San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge will be closed in both directions over the Labor Day weekend in September 2009 to accommodate an operation critical to the construction of the bridge's new



BILL HALL, CALTRANS

Crews are working round-the-clock to finish the traffic bypass, shown just to the right of the existing bridge.

East Span. Crews will use the opportunity to slice out a double-deck chunk of the existing East Span that is the length of a football field, and slide in a new double-deck piece that will shift traffic to a temporary bypass.

The maneuver echoes a similar deck removal and roll-in that took place over Labor Day weekend 2007.

"This is a massive operation," said Caltrans spokesperson Bart Ney. "We're talking about moving nearly 7,000 tons of steel, 150 feet in the air." The traffic shift will clear the way for crews to eventually hook up the new East Span with the Yerba Buena Island tunnel.

Crews are currently at work seven days a week, 20 hours a day finishing the detour viaduct and building the temporary support structures that will be used

to roll the old bridge truss out and the new one in over the holiday weekend. Over the months to come, the new tie-in truss section and a movable support system will take shape south of the existing bridge at deck level, 150 feet in the air. Most of the half-mile-long, double-deck viaduct detour is already observable to motorists on the bridge.

MTC is working with Caltrans and local public transit agencies to ensure mobility options for trans-bay travelers. BART will run all-night service to select stations over Labor Day weekend, and extra vessels will be deployed to expand ferry service on select routes.

— Karin Betts

As Labor Day weekend nears, MTC's 511 phone service and <[511.org](#)> Web site will be the official source for transit information and traffic conditions. Construction updates also will be posted on <[www.baybridgeinfo.org](#)>.

Bridge Views Galore

If you've crossed the existing East Span of the Bay Bridge lately, you've probably caught tantalizing but frustratingly fleeting glimpses of cranes and construction activity on the new self-anchored suspension span (SAS). Now there's a way to savor the experience, up close and virtually. A trio of stationary cameras are taking shots at regular intervals and beaming images to MTC's Web site.

Not only can you view the construction live and in real-time, you

can go back in time to view construction progress as of any day since early October 2008. A virtual joystick allows you to zoom in on the work and workers, and to pan across the image. You can toggle to a panoramic option that provides a nearly 360-degree view of the construction zone and the impressive sweep of the already completed East Span Skyway that stands expectantly, ready for the day when it will link to the SAS.

— Brenda Kahn

[View at <bata.mtc.ca.gov>](#).



Now you can check progress on the new East Span tower section without leaving your desk and share the image with friends via e-mail or a text message.

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